



U.S. Department of Justice

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FORMER FREEPORT MAN SENTENCED TO MORE THAN 19 YEARS IN FEDERAL PRISON ON FEDERAL DRUG AND GUN CHARGES

ROCKFORD – PATRICK J. FITZGERALD, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois; ANDREW L. TRAVER, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago Division of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; LARRY G. TRENT, Director of the Illinois State Police; and JERRY WHITMORE, Freeport Police Chief, today made the following announcement:

United States District Judge Frederick J. Kapala today sentenced **JEROME HOWARD**, also known as “Jake,” 30, formerly of Freeport, Illinois, to 230 months in federal prison without parole for distributing 4.1 grams of cocaine base (“crack” cocaine) and possessing firearms as a convicted felon.

Howard pleaded guilty to the charges on August 7, 2007. In pleading guilty, Howard admitted that between March 16, 2007 and April 12, 2007 he sold crack cocaine on five occasions to an individual who, unbeknownst to Howard, was an undercover police officer. According to the plea agreement, during conversations between April 2, 2007 and April 22, 2007, Howard asked the officer if he could obtain any guns for Howard. Howard admitted that he agreed to provide the officer crack cocaine in exchange for firearms. Howard admitted that on April 23, 2007 he met with the officer in Freeport. Howard entered the officer’s vehicle and provided the officer with 4.1 grams of crack cocaine in exchange for a Colt .45 caliber semi-automatic handgun and a Ruger .357 Magnum revolver. Howard also admitted that after he got out of the vehicle law enforcement officers approached him to place him under arrest. Howard ran, but was apprehended a short time later. Howard further admitted that prior to April 23, 2007, that he had been convicted of multiple felony offenses. Howard has been in federal custody since his arrest.

Howard, with three prior felony convictions for violent crimes and drug trafficking offenses, was sentenced as a “career offender” on the drug charge and as an “armed career criminal” on the firearms charge under tough federal laws that ensure lengthy, non-paroleable sentences for those repeatedly convicted of drug trafficking and violent crimes. In addition to 230 months in prison, the court ordered Howard to serve 6 years of supervised release following his release from prison. Howard was also ordered to pay a \$750 fine and a \$200 special assessment.

The case was investigated by the Rockford office of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the Freeport Police Department, and the Illinois State Police State Line Area Narcotics Team (“SLANT”). SLANT is a multi-jurisdictional drug task force consisting of law enforcement agents and officers from the Illinois State Police, the Freeport Police Department, the Roscoe Police Department, the Loves Park Police Department, the Monroe Police Department, the LaFayette County Sheriff’s Department, and the Green County Sheriff’s Department.

The case was prosecuted in federal court by Assistant United States Attorney Joseph C. Pedersen.

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